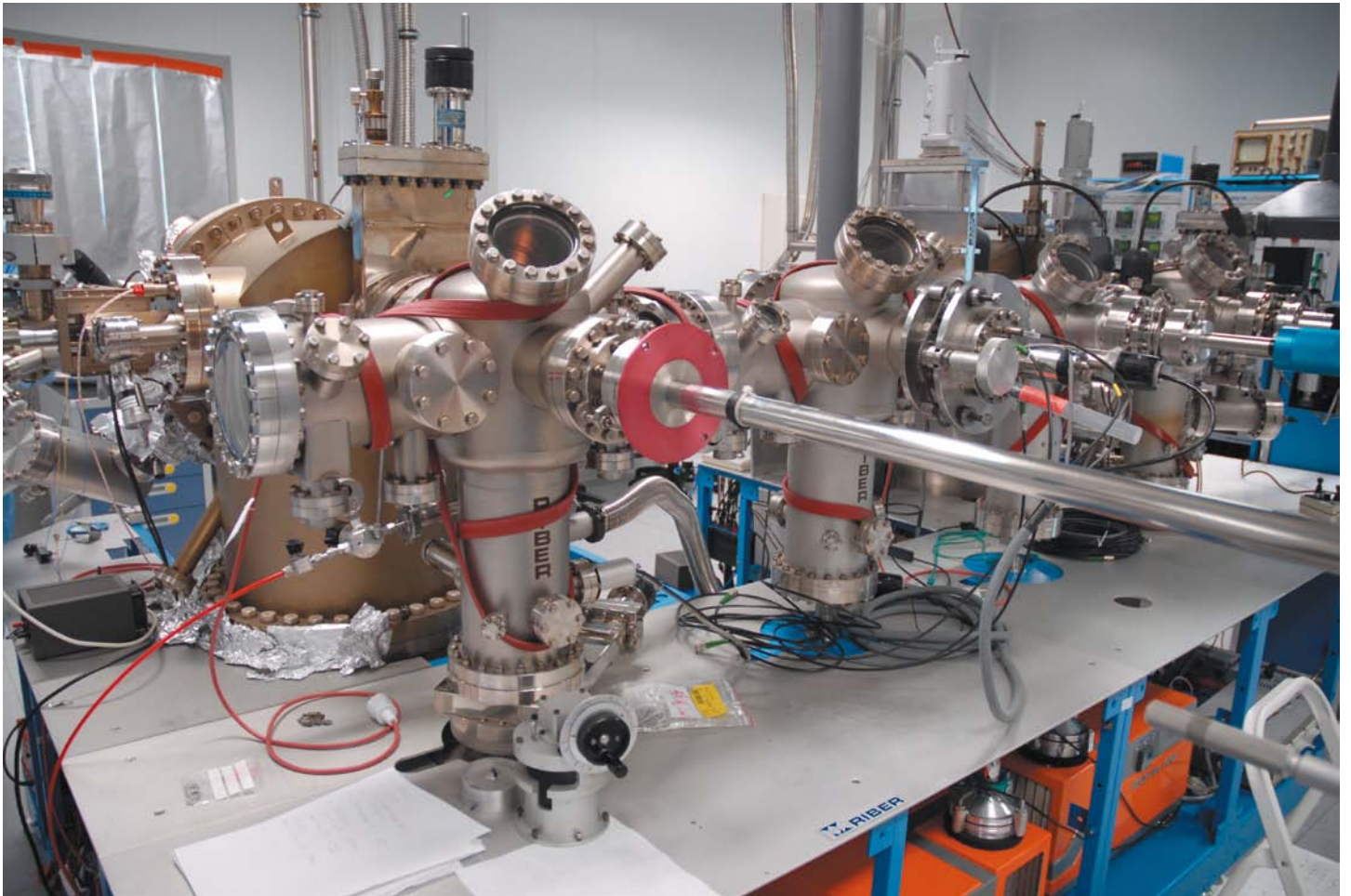


Cross-border Euroregional strategies for economic development and innovation



Research and innovation in the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion

BORDER	France / Spain
TERRITORY	Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion; Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion
DATE	2013 and 2014
OBJECTIVE	Formulation of Euroregional strategies with a dimension linked to cross-border economic development

WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

The strategic role of the regions in the area of economic development was strengthened during the 2007-2013 European programme period, with the formulation of regional innovation strategies. This trend will continue in the 2014-2020 period as Smart Specialisation Strategies – S3 – will take over.

The Euroregions are becoming an important level for the formulation of cross-border strategies for economic development.

WHAT DO THE STRATEGIES CONSIST OF?

In 2014, the **Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion**, which is made up of the Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon Regions and the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, **put in place a Euroregional Innovation Strategy for three priority sectors** (water, e-health and agri-food) and a cross-cutting area (tourism).

The objective of this strategy is to encourage Euroregional collaboration in the cooperation between public-sector and economic players in the four member regions. The strategy will also contribute to the integrated territorial development of the Euroregion. In the same way as the regional S3S, this strategy aims to focus public resources on a small number of sectors in which the Euroregion has a global comparative advantage. In concrete terms, it will support initiatives that make more sense and have a greater impact at the Euroregional level.

The basis for this strategy is an assessment that has highlighted complementarities in the regional innovation strategies of the four regions that make up the Euroregion. Comparative analyses of the three priority sectors, which notably brought out the four regions' common aspirations and challenges, made it possible to identify sub-topics of common interest (cross-border areas of specialisation). Lastly, for each area of specialisation the Euroregion's assets, the dominant players in the four member regions and existing projects were analysed.

THE EUROREGIONAL INNOVATION STRATEGY SETS OUT TWO STRATEGIC WORK GUIDELINES:

- to reconcile top-down and bottom-up approaches in order to take better account of the aspirations of players on the ground
- to create the conditions necessary for the emergence of a Euroregional ecosystem of innovation

In concrete terms, the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion EGTC will help to establish contacts between players in order to encourage the formation of partnerships and the set-up of projects. It will also work continuously to enhance the regional players' shared knowledge, as well as focusing its efforts on the priority areas. To do this, the EGTC will collaborate with the departments of the four regions and with the regional innovation agencies.

In 2014, the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion drew up a Strategic Plan for 2014-2020 which identifies the development priorities for the territory. This multi-thematic document also deals with the economy and innovation.

A socio-economic assessment sets out the basis for the strategic guidelines and gives an up-to-date overview of the territory in terms of demography, jobs and training, economic activity, innovation and technologies, transport, communication and tourism. In addition, a review of the Aquitaine-Euskadi cooperation during the 2007-2013 period has made it possible to establish the point of departure for the next European programme period, which the Strategic Plan is designed for.

The strategic guidelines set out by this document focus on four areas: Euroregional citizenship; the knowledge-based economy, innovation and entrepreneurial competitiveness; sustainable territory; and open governance.

In the area of the economy, the long-term objective is to “move towards a knowledge-based economy and improve businesses’ competitiveness and openness to new markets, by stimulating cooperation between them, as well as the education system and all of the research and innovation centres that exist in the Euroregion”.

To do this, the actions carried out as part of the 2014-2020 Strategic Plan aim at improving mutual knowledge and communication between the territory's economic players and those from the world of research. The strategy sets out 13 lines of action which will support educational mobility, common qualifications and vocational training. It will also encourage cross-border entrepreneurship and give impetus to synergies (inter-clustering, Euroregional innovation strategy) that will enable them to work together, develop new activities and gain access to new markets. All of these efforts will be concentrated primarily on the priority sectors identified by the two regions' smart specialisation strategies, in which the potential for synergies is more important, linked to policies for jobs and mobility.



HOW HAVE THE STRATEGIES BEEN FORMULATED?

A key element in the formulation of these two Euroregional strategies was the search for complementarities between the regional innovation strategies and S3S,¹⁴⁵ as well as economic development strategies and other regional programmes.

The formulation of the assessment for the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion's strategy was entrusted to a consultancy firm in 2013 under the Midi-Pyrénées Region's presidency of the Euroregion. A consultation of the Regions/Autonomous Communities, regional innovation agencies, competitiveness hubs and clusters made it possible to compare the four regional innovation strategies, the means used to support the priority sectors and the systems of governance put in place. This phase also highlighted the existing cooperation initiatives in the Euroregion, as well as potential future developments. The Euroregional strategy drawn up on the basis of this assessment was then validated by the political representatives of the four regions.

The comparison of the regional strategies made it possible to identify priority sub-areas for each sector, chosen on the basis of technical criteria (regional economic and research potential), financing criteria (European, national and regional funding, etc.) and political criteria (players' willingness to cooperate).

The drawing-up of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion's Strategic Plan was steered by the EGTC (with help from the consultancy firm IKEI). A major exercise of consultation of the main public- and private-sector players in the two regions, as well as of existing cooperation structures in the territory, was carried out.



HOW WILL THE STRATEGIES BE IMPLEMENTED?

Both of the Euroregions identify the European programmes (regional and cooperation programmes) as the first source of funding for the implementation of their strategies.

In the Aquitaine-Euskadi Strategic Plan, for each line of action the most relevant programmes and thematic objectives to support projects have been specified. The Plan also stipulates that there should be annual monitoring and evaluation of implementation in order to help prepare for the post-2020 programme.

¹⁴⁵ Smart Specialisation Strategies.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THIS GOOD PRACTICE BE ADOPTED IN OTHER CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIES?

These two strategies are good examples of cross-border transnational and regional cooperation aimed at promoting the economic development of the territory as a whole and encouraging innovation. They can serve as inspiration for other border regions that have not yet formalised their cooperation in a strategic manner.

It is interesting to note the great diversity of economic players and those from the world of research involved in the formulation of the strategic guidelines, the methods used to identify complementarities between the regional strategies and the potential for cross-border synergies, as well as the concrete actions that will be implemented. On this last point, it will be interesting to monitor the actual implementation of actions and in particular the mobilisation of different sources of funding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregional Innovation Strategy (in French and Catalan):

<http://www.euroregio.eu/fr/innovation-et-developpement-economique/strategie-euroregionale-de-linnovation>

The 2014-2020 Strategic Plan of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion EGTC:

<http://www.aquitaine-euskadi.eu>

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